

VOLTA

Vol. 10, No. 3 May/June 2003

# VOICES

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL ASSOCIATION FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

## PROFILE IN PERSEVERANCE: How One Russian Researcher Led a Transformation in Deaf Education

AGBell  
[www.agbell.org](http://www.agbell.org)

# BELL SPEAKS

by Michelle Vanderhoff, Managing Editor

## ENTERTAINMENT ACCESS PROJECT

What would you do if you had spent 2 or 3 hours on the phone arranging and double-checking on the availability of an assistive listening device so your child could accompany you to a Broadway show, only to be met by an ill-trained, if well-meaning, attendant holding a cardboard box of jumbled wires and gizmos? It gets worse. The attendant hands you a patch cord for a cochlear implant. Your child uses hearing aids. You could get upset, or you could take positive action.

AG Bell member Janice Schacter of New York City chose the latter. Recognizing the excellent work of organizations such as the League for the Hard of Hearing (LHH) in New York in securing electronic accommodations in many entertainment venues, Schacter set out to educate these businesses' executives about the value of not just owning assistive devices, but understanding the technology, its benefits and maintaining the equipment. Who among us has not been met with a device with uncharged batteries!

These frustrating incidents in obtaining accessibility are not only experienced by Schacter and other parents, but also by adults with hearing loss. The *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA) has improved access to the mainstream for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, but its interpretations can be frustrating, often complicating the access rather than improving it. We know that many entertainment venues such as amusement parks and concert arenas proudly adver-

tise their accessibility, and they are justly proud of their large expenditures on their accessibility infrastructure. But, when batteries aren't charged or the seat with the headset is too distant from the stage for lipreading, the expenditures have little value for individuals who are oral deaf.

Schacter is working with AG Bell, experts from the LHH, assistive technology providers, and executives of theater companies to develop a plan to help train personnel to understand, maintain, advertise, and distribute assistive devices to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Entertainment venues, religious institutions, sports complexes all want their attendees to participate, but they just need the know-how to make it happen.

Are you interested in finding out more or getting on board with the AG Bell Entertainment Access Committee? Call Carol McGrath at AG Bell at 202/337-5220 ext. 116 (voice) or 202/337-5221 (TTY) or email her at [cmcgrath@agbell.org](mailto:cmcgrath@agbell.org).